

CHAPTER XX.

GAMES ON THE BIRTH OF THE MALE CHILD OF A
CACIQUE.

THE love implanted in the minds of all nations towards their prince never shows itself more clearly than when the birth of an heir is announced. Festive fires, theatrical games, joyous acclamations, songs, paintings, sculpture, elegant dances, and various other things attest the public joy. This custom of the Europeans, the 852 savage and warlike Abipones in their fashion 622 imitate. They make public show of rejoicing for some days, when informed of the birth of a Cacique's son. As soon as a report is spread of the birth of the son of a Cacique, the whole crowd of girls, bearing palm boughs in their hands, repair to the house of the infant amid festive acclamations; they run round the roof and sides of it, shaking the palm boughs, by which percussion they happily augur that the child will become famous in war, and the scourge of his enemies. The use of the palms, and the other ceremonies which follow all have relation to this. The strongest of the women is covered from the loins to the legs, with a sort

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

217

of apron made of the longer ostrich feathers. 852
 That woman has every day the most business to 622
 perform; for in company with the other girls, [537]
 she visits all the huts, and with a hide, twisted 292] ●
 in the form of Hercules's club, whips, puts to
 flight, and pursues all the men that she finds in
 every house, and those that are met by the way
 are soundly beaten by the girls, with the palm
 boughs. The first day is passed in this running
 up and down, amidst the laughter of the flagel-
 lated men. Next day the girls, who are distri- [526]
 buted into bands, wrestle with one another,
 and the boys do the same in a separate place.
 On the third day they are called out to dance, [535]
 the boys on one side, and the girls on the other.
 They all join hands till a circle is formed, an [534]
 old woman, the directress of the dance going
 round striking a gourd: and when after a whirl-
 ing for some time, they grow giddy, they rest
 at intervals, and then renew their dancing,
 which contains nothing worthy of admiration,
 but the patience displayed on the part both of
 the spectators and of the performers, and is
 perfectly devoid of art. On the fourth day, the [526]
 woman with the apron of ostrich feathers tra-
 verses the town, surrounded by girls, challeng-
 ing the stoutest and strongest woman she finds
 in every house, to contend with her in the
 street; and now throwing her adversary, now
 BEING HERSELF THROWN, AFFORDS AN
 AMUSING SPECTACLE TO THE ASSEMBLED
 PEOPLE.